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**Background Paper 30**

**ADULT TRAINER - AN EMERGING AND  
NECESSARY PROFESSION**

**L.H. Reeves**

# **Skill Development Leave Task Force**

**Background  
Paper**

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(4)

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**ADULT TRAINER - AN EMERGING AND  
NECESSARY PROFESSION**

**L.H. Reeves**

**Training Branch, CEIC**

**1983**

This is one in a series of background papers prepared for the Task Force on Skill Development Leave. The opinions expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Task Force or the Department of Employment and Immigration.





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## ADULT TRAINER - AN EMERGING AND NECESSARY PROFESSION

The annual investment in human resource training and development is estimated to be about 35 billion dollars for North America, a large part of which has been dedicated to training personnel in governments, including military personnel. A fair estimate for the Canadian human resource training and development investment would be two to three billion dollars. It is believed by many trainers that increased dividends on this investment can be achieved by organizations if the process of training became more efficient and more effective. That process of training would include such elements as the selection of candidates for training and development programs, the development of the curriculum and the learning experience itself. Each of the elements is open to improvement but such improvement depends on the human factor - the trainer.

The training profession is making strong demands on new entrants to the field. There is a continuing emphasis on the quality of instructional content and delivery. As well, there is an expansion of programs which reflect the rapidly changing world of work that demands new behavioral and technical skills of participants. For example, massive changes are being brought about by the technological advances of the microelectronics era. Computers and many other electronic products are finding their way into industry, the home and the school.



Though much adult training takes place within the more formal institutional structure of the school, the university, community college or continuing education classes of a local school system, a large part of the total training investment goes into training programs for workers within business, industry and the voluntary sector. Educators or trainers within institutions frequently have credentials obtained after learning how to train through courses taken at teacher training institutions. Trainers in industry and the general world of work generally have been trained on-the-job, that is, they have learned how to train through the experience of training, most frequently with the assistance of a more senior trainer. Furthermore, most trainers have had exposure to special training programs for trainers.

Continuing education programs for trainers are being launched by a number of universities, community colleges and commercial firms. These programs are developed to meet the needs of novice or inexperienced trainers and for experienced trainers who must frequently develop or use more sophisticated training media than the traditional print, still frame or motion picture films. Computer-assisted instruction using high quality courseware is introducing and emphasizing self-paced and individualized instruction. Nevertheless, the trainer must be versed in how and when to introduce pre-selected material for the computer as well as how to integrate it in a well-managed, comprehensive learning experience.

Trainers in large organizations are frequently part of a personnel or human resource team. Many of these trainers have had



professional experience in recruitment or staffing work, or they have worked as compensation, benefits or employee relations specialists. Training for some of these individuals is an area of personnel operations which will allow them to gain the additional experience that would permit them to move into a more senior position. It is here where we may distinguish between the professional trainer in the field of training and development and the professional in the general field of personnel. One is a professional adult educator, the other a professional personnel specialist. Many "professional" trainers want to achieve some form of credentialling, some form of certification. They want to be recognized as competent; they have a desire for greater status; they are searching for professionalism.

Professional standards can be achieved through extensive formal learning or study that terminates in examinations for a degree or certificate. Some trainers have doubts about certification that reflects rigid professional standards. Nonetheless, they do believe in the continuing upgrading of training skills and knowledge.

There is a need for a minimal code of ethics and a set of standards for those individuals who would like to become professional trainers.

The Ontario Society for Training and Development (OSTD) was responsible for the development of an operational model of competencies and skills that are required of a trainer. The resultant publication is "Competency Analysis For Trainers: A Personal Planning Guide." By using the "CAT" an individual can develop a personal skill profile which can be compared with an inventory of required on-the-job skills. The



individual can then determine the skills and knowledge that need to be developed. This assessment would then form the content for the person's continuing professional development program. As new skills and knowledge are acquired by the trainer, an ongoing assessment against the "CAT" can be conducted. The Society does not provide a competency-based examination. Validation of formally acquired skills and knowledge is done through a review of paper transcripts. When the individual completes the "CAT", a more formal but voluntary accreditation program can be entered.

The Ontario Society for Training and Development has a professional development accreditation program which provides incentive and recognition for individual development efforts. These may be in the areas of personal learning activities, professional activities and work experience in the field of training and development. A "Certificate of Achievement" is issued by OSTD to individuals who have reached a particular level of accomplishment.

At this state in the evaluation of the training and development field, there is a need for a more universal agreement on the competencies required of a training and development person. For those who see themselves as professionals, an instrument such as the "CAT" can be used as a basis to describe the individual's strengths, abilities and areas of knowledge. By following a professional development program sponsored by a training society such as the Ontario Society's "Professional Development and Accreditation Program" an individual can achieve recognition as an accredited professional.



It is believed that the Canadian Society for Training and Development will use the OSTD program as a model for a national accreditation program. As appropriate behaviorially based tools are not available to assess the competencies of training and development practitioners, accreditation should meet the immediate needs of the adult trainer in an emerging and necessary profession.





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